

WorkFirst Reform Partnership Training

Expanded Training and Education Options

April 2006

Governor Gregoire's Directive

- Renewed sense of mission.
- Reform the program to achieve better success for parents through community partnerships to weave a tighter safety net.
- WorkFirst must improve and provide supports to help parents find jobs and keep jobs, including child care.
- Parents must participate in the program or lose support
- The state will use Government Management, Accountability and Performance (GMAP) to oversee the program's results and outcomes.

WorkFirst Values

- Work is the best avenue to break the cycle of poverty for families.
- Parents have a responsibility to take care of and provide for their children.
- The community, with the support of the state, has a responsibility to help low-income families.
- Every citizen in the state has the responsibility for the safety of our children.
- We all must be accountable in carrying out our parts of the program if we are to achieve success.

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Overview

As part of Governor Gregoire's WorkFirst Reform Initiatives, it was recognized that education and vocational training are valuable tools for some parents to attain employment and reach self-sufficiency. As a result, the program is expanding the training and education options available for WorkFirst parents.

Policy

Based on the results of the comprehensive evaluation, as well as objective criteria that take into account a parent's previous education and work experience, the local labor market and other relevant information, some parents will participate for up to 12 months in vocational training leading to employment.

The available training options will be discussed with the parent during a one-on-one session with staff as part of the comprehensive evaluation. Parents will be given the opportunity to be involved in the decision making process that identifies the activities he or she will engage in, and counseled as to the positive impact that successfully completed training can have on their employment opportunities and wages. The emphasis on participation with the goal of getting a good job at the completion of training will be reinforced.

In cases where parents have had no successful college experience, the educational evaluation done as part of the comprehensive evaluation will include a basic skills appraisal. Some parents will be directed toward basic education as the most appropriate activity for them, based on objective criteria that take into consideration their appraisal scores and other personal and labor market factors. In most cases, basic education will be bundled with other activities, including job search, part-time work, or vocational training where appropriate and available. Under certain circumstances, basic skills can be a stand alone activity. Under certain conditions, clients may be referred to vocational training upon achievement of basic skills goals.

Opportunity

As stated in Governor Gregoire's WorkFirst Reform Strategy:

If there are opportunities for better employment, in terms of wages or benefits, through training that can be carried out in one year and the client's skills and interests make it reasonable to pursue, the client will be counseled that training will improve chances of getting a better job.

The program's intention is to match "the right parents with the right activities," including educational activities. The ultimate intention of all education and training is to assist the parent to enter employment and reach self-sufficiency.